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**NEWS RELEASE**



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*Protecting Alaska's Future*

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**U.S. District Court Grants State's Request to Intervene in Juneau Access Lawsuit**

(Juneau) – Attorney General David Márquez announced today that U.S. District Court Judge John Sedwick granted the state's request to intervene in a federal lawsuit filed by the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC) against the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Transportation involving the Juneau Access improvement project.

On August 16, 2006 SEACC and various other groups filed a complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief in federal court to enjoin contract award or construction of the first segment of the Juneau access project. The plaintiffs assert various violations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental rules. The plaintiffs also challenge the final environmental impact statement (EIS) approved by the FHWA.

"The lawsuit threatens to delay or halt the first phase of the Juneau Access improvement project – a project that will ultimately make the state's capital more accessible to its citizens and reduce transportation costs of people and goods to Juneau, while still protecting the environment," said Márquez.

The state also has an interest in this case because the State Department of Transportation and Public Facilities took a lead role in the environmental work being challenged.

"The Lynn Canal Highway is an important component in the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan and plays an important role in the long-term health of the Alaska Marine Highway System," said DOT&PF Commissioner Mike Barton. "The state's direct participation in defending this project against unnecessary litigation will ensure Alaska's interests are adequately protected."

In order to protect the state's transportation and environmental protection interests, the Department of Law moved to intervene in the lawsuit as a full party defendant. "This direct participation in the lawsuit will ensure that the state's interests are adequately protected, and that issues specific to the State of Alaska are brought to the Court's attention," said Márquez.

"The Juneau Access Project is vital to the state's long-term statewide transportation improvement plan," said Governor Frank H. Murkowski. "It is absolutely essential that an important community such as Juneau, which is a major Southeast Alaska population center and the state capital, become integrated into America's National Highway System."